

## 4.12 AESTHETICS

This section addresses the visual quality issues related to the proposed project. The existing visual character of the region is described, and any sensitive visual receptors or sensitive aesthetic resources identified. County policies related to the maintenance of visual quality are presented. The impact analysis presents the standards used to evaluate impacts to visual quality and addresses potential effects of the proposed project on the visual quality of the area.

### 4.12.1 SETTING

#### *VISUAL CHARACTER OF THE REGION*

Open space (grasslands and savanna) in the foreground, rolling terrain of the Sierra Foothills beyond, and the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the background generally characterize the historic visual character of the region. The area surrounding the project site was predominantly rural and pastoral in character, but is rapidly converting to an urban landscape, including housing subdivisions, industrial facilities, roadways, and commercial development.

#### *VISUAL CHARACTER OF THE PROJECT SITE*

The land surrounding the project site has a rolling topography with an elevation ranging from 100 to 150 feet above mean sea level. Uplands contain expansive fields and some vernal pools, while lowlands contain streams and marshes. The main ridges and knolls in the vicinity of the project site can be up to 20 feet higher than the stream channels. The land surfaces and streams generally slope west towards the middle of the Sacramento Valley and the Sacramento River.

The project site is located in an undeveloped area and consists of flat annual grasslands. Trees are absent from the proposed road construction corridor, except for a stand of Eucalyptus trees along Athens Avenue. **Figure 4.2-1** shows the panoramic views from the center of the site looking north and south, and **Figure 4.2-2** shows the panoramic views looking east and west. Power lines are visible along Industrial Avenue and Athens Avenue. North of the proposed site is a cement factory, Orchard Creek Mitigation Bank, Thunder Valley Casino, Orchard Creek and a freshwater marsh. A freshwater marsh and unnamed tributary of Pleasant Grove Creek is present in the southern portion of the Study Area.

In addition to open fields, several industrial facilities are located in the surrounding area, including the Rio Bravo power plant visible to the southeast of the proposed project, and the Placer County landfill to the west. There are no existing residences or structures on the proposed site, and the adjacent areas are undeveloped. Although the Athens Avenue and Industrial Boulevard corridors are not designated as scenic corridors, the *Sunset Industrial Area Plan* has established design guidelines for development along these roadways.

***PLANS AND POLICIES******Placer County General Plan***

The following goals, objectives, and policies for visual resources and aesthetics contained in the Placer County General Plan are relevant to the proposed project.

- Goal 1K:** To protect the visual and scenic resources of Placer County as important quality-of-life amenities for county residents and a principal asset in the promotion of recreation and tourism.
- Policy 1.K.3:** The County shall require that new development incorporate landscaping that provides a transition between the vegetation in developed areas and adjacent open space or undeveloped areas.
- Policy 1.K.4:** The County shall require that new development incorporates sound soil conservation practices and minimizes land alterations. Land alterations should comply with the following guidelines:
- a. Limit cut and fills;
  - b. Limit grading to the smallest practical area of land;
  - c. Limit land exposure to the shortest practical amount of time;
  - d. Replant graded areas to ensure establishment of plant cover before the next rainy season; and
  - e. Create grading contours that blend with the natural contours on site or with contours on property immediately adjacent to the area of development.
- Policy 1.K.5:** The county shall require that new roads, parking, and utilities be designed to minimize visual impacts. Unless limited by geological or engineering constraints, utilities should be installed underground and roadways and parking areas should be designed to fit the natural terrain.

***Sunset Industrial Area Plan***

The Sunset Industrial Area (SIA) Plan contains goals and policies to minimize adverse effects on the natural resources of the Sunset Industrial Area, especially during new development, such as preservation of open space, preservation of wildlife habitats, and supporting diversity of plants and native trees and vegetation. The SIA Plan indicates that Placer County will enforce landscape guidelines to ensure that new development landscaping is designed to integrate existing vegetative conditions into site design.

**4.12.2 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES*****SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA***

The evaluation of potential impacts is based on the project's ability to change the visual character of the site as determined by the following criteria:

- obstruction of a scenic view from public viewing areas;
- introduction of physical features that are substantially out of character with adjacent areas;
- alteration of the natural landscape characteristics of the site of which the scale or degree of change appears as a substantial, obvious, and disharmonious modification of the overall scene, to the extent that it clearly dominates the view;
- disruption of adjacent residential areas from new nighttime lighting; or
- inconsistency with the Placer General Plan.

### ***IMPACT STATEMENTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES***

#### **Impact**

#### **4.12.1 Construction of the proposed road would result in the loss of open space and views, and contribute to the urban setting. This would be a less than significant impact.**

Currently the land in and around the immediate vicinity and view shed of the proposed project consist of open space with no sensitive receptors. The project would create a visual impact to this area, but those who would be affected include motorists passing by on the surrounding roadways and business in the immediate area.

Therefore, development of the project, despite the loss of open space and the associated view, is not anticipated to result in significant adverse impacts to visual resources because no sensitive receptors are present within the immediate vicinity and view shed of the proposed project.

#### **Mitigation Measure**

None required.